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TAGS: [SENV](#) [UNGA](#)
SUBJECT: UN SECRETARIAT THINKING ON HANDLING CLIMATE CHANGE
AT THE UNGA

1. (SBU) Mission has received a copy of internal secretariat documents proposing various strategies for climate change leadership by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and a high-level event on climate change at the General Assembly. Copies have been forwarded electronically to IO/EDA (Tuminaro) and OES/EGC (Talley). The papers, drafted primarily by Yvo De Boer (UNFCCC) but vetted by a group consisting of Achim Steiner (UNEP), Jose Antonio Ocampo (DESA) and Bob Orr, propose wrapping climate change around the opening of the 62nd General Assembly with a dinner for heads of state hosted by the Secretary General, a panel briefing by the IPCC and representatives from NGOs and the business community and a four hour "interactive dialogue among participants." The proposal includes options for an outcome document for the event, ranging from no outcome to a negotiated communiqu, and appointment by the Secretary General of five personal envoys (Gro Brundtland, Fernando Cardoso, Nitin Desai, Han Seung-soo, and James Wolfensohn) on climate change.

2. (SBU) Ambassador Miller contacted Bob Orr April 5 to ascertain the status of the papers. Orr initially did not know, but called back to say they had already gone to the SYG. In the subsequent discussion, Miller raised several issues:

--Timing - Having such an event at the opening of the GA session would raise expectations of high-level attendance and put pressure on leaders already planning to attend the GA to take public stands on climate change. Such public posturing at the beginning of what is going to be a long process of negotiations on this issue could harden country positions and make ultimate agreement on actions much more difficult. Something later in the session, or even following the December UNFCCC Bali meeting, might be more appropriate and propitious. The US agreed with the Secretary General's earlier expressed viewpoint that the time for summits was at the end of a negotiation, not the beginning.

-- Outcome document) A negotiated communiqu seemed out of the question given the timing and circumstances.

-- Inclusiveness) Important that any GA event allow for participation by all UN members and expression of all viewpoints, particularly given the breadth and complexity of climate change-related issues.

-- Establishment of a deadline (paper proposes conclusion of negotiations by 2009.) We could not agree to a deadline for reaching agreement on a negotiation that had not even started yet.

-- Sobriety rather than sensationalism - Climate change raised very complicated, difficult, and long-term issues that might require major adjustments, both economic and cultural, by societies. These issues needed careful and serious discussion. Good solutions would not be easy to identify or agree upon. Building an international political consensus on appropriate actions could be the most difficult thing the UN

had ever attempted to negotiate. An atmosphere of sensationalism or the encouragement of apocalyptic thinking would not be conducive to progress, and we did not see a role for celebrities as panelists or presenters on the subject (this in response to an increasing tendency by the Secretariat to artificially raise the profile of events by

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including celebrities as presenters or spokespersons).

¶3. (SBU) Orr noted that he understood the US position on all of these issues and that the Secretary General remained committed to proceeding in a manner that would not make the US uncomfortable. The Secretary General did not support a "summitese" event on climate change. Nonetheless, there was intense pressure on him to take a leadership position on the issue and something would have to be done at the GA. Orr particularly thought a dinner for selected leaders would be appropriate. A public debate would be hard to manage in the short time allowed, but many leaders would want to say something on the issue. There might be some flexibility on timing. He agreed that a negotiated outcome document was not feasible and that it was vital to set the right tone (positive, forward-looking, serious) for the UN on this issue.

¶4. (SBU) Orr and Miller agreed that they would stay in touch as an informal way to exchange information and thinking in addition to Orr's official communications on this issue with Undersecretary Dobriansky.

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